1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

only five children living, and the largest polygynous household had only four, but many children had died in infancy.

The attitudes within the household are much like those found universally between members of the same 'family'. Children respect and love both parents. Perhaps there is a little more respect for the father and a little more love for the mother, but this distinction is not carried to the extent which seems to be the case in more strongly patrilineal societies. The respect which a child has for his parents is plainly shown in his refusal under ordinary circumstances to speak their names. 'Even a child on being asked to tell the name of his father or his mother, will reply saying, "*Tate* (my father) indeed is his name." And if one asks again, saying, "Your mother, what is her name?" the child will reply saying, "*Mai* (my mother) indeed is her name." '[1] The sex division of Umbundu life begins within the household when very early in life the boys begin to be trained by their elder brothers, fathers, and other male relatives, while the girls remain or go about with their mothers, elder sisters, and other female relatives. Only the very small boys and girls (say under six or eight) play together. The age distinctions of Umbundu society are learned with the child's first attempts at language. Either his elder brother or sister he calls *huvange*, and he soon learns that the brother or sister younger than himself is *manjange*. Brothers and sisters, siblings or children of the same parents, 'are replicas of one another in social relationship, and . . . socially identical'[2] for practical purposes. Among Ovimbundu the principal differences are due to the two factors of age and sex. The influence of age is fundamental and is easily demonstrated by the fact that there is no word for 'brother' but instead for 'elder brother' or 'younger brother'. Within the household the factor of sex is ever present, but there is not the invidious distinction found among some of the more strongly patrilineal societies such as the Zulu[2] which reserves the more respectful term for the brother. Umbundu applies the terms *huva* and *manja*[3] to brothers and sisters without distinction of sex. There are the additional terms *kota* (elder brother), *mbuale* (sister), and the reciprocal terms *mume* (brother, spoken

[1] R. Kavita Evambi, from an Umbundu manuscript.

[2] E. J. Krige, *The Social System of the Zulus* (London: Longmans, 1936), p. 24.

[3] These are the root terms without the possessive suffixes.

1: Childs M-S (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

593 only by a sister), and *mukãi* (sister, spoken only by a brother). In
[511] a polygynous household each of the wives is mother to all the
children and each of the children is *kuetu* or *manja*[1] to all the others.
848 Illegitimate children are not stigmatised but since they belong to
567 the mother they have a distinct designation.[2] Slaves or former
slaves have a status within the household and village which to the
ordinary observer does not differ from that of the children: they
are treated much as the children and they may carry on in all
matters social and economic much as though they were members
of the family. I have noticed, however, that when there is a call for
labour, the lot falls oftener to one of these 'children-born-by-day'[3]
whether he was a war-captive or a pawn.

567 Both slavery and the polygynous household, two institutions
595 manifestly and intimately inter-related, are still a part of the
178 Umbundu social structure, but neither the one nor the other now
has the importance which it formerly had. Neither of these
institutions is part of the present and personal experience of the
great majority of Umbundu households.

Kinship

596 *Blood Relatives* (*Epata*). The relationships of the wider kinship
602 groups are for the most part extensions of those of the household.
621 The child learns them very early in life owing to the fact that the
village community into which he is born is only a part of this
larger kinship group. Nearly all of the villagers belong to the
same *epata* or extended family, which includes both lines of
descent. Most of them belong to the father's family (*olusi*), and
the mother's family (*olusina*) may also be represented. The fact is
that most of the adults of the village are father or mother to
nearly every child and most of the children are brothers or sisters.
Those of his coevals who do not bear this relation to him are
otherwise related and are also potential spouses or potential
relatives-in-law.

[1] This distinction *yesipakui* (lit. 'of the jealousy of women') may be made but it is not applied in ordinary speech.

[2] *Omãli a ngendo-lo-eso* (lit. 'child of goes-with-mother').

[3] *Omãli-co-ciuisa-hatanya*. Cf. 'child of my calves', Luganda expression and attitudes, L. P. Mair, *An African People in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1934), p. 32 f.

1: Childs M-8 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

754 attacks also upon the persons or possessions of enemies. This type of sorcery in a very common form involves the enslavement of the spirit of another person, often a child of one's own family or kin.[1] The person whose spirit is used may be killed either by violent or by magical means. Sorcery of this type is much feared, but if wealth supposedly gained by this means is used for the benefit of the kin, the sorcerer may be tolerated or even protected in the exercise of his black art. Beneficiaries do not often have qualms concerning the source of the benefits received. One who, by reason of his family connexions or his own power, has secured a strong position may escape interference. Jealousy or grudges, however, often bring out accusations from within the circle of kin.

754 Accusations may also be made by outsiders. With the decline in 482 influence which the tribal courts have suffered, and their inability to inflict capital punishment, sorcery is less frequently punished than formerly. The consequent reductions in the number of innocent victims is a gain. This same cause has operated, how- [177] ever, to increase dealings in, and fear of, sorcery. Most of the cases brought to European courts, and even to the Church, under the name of 'poisoning' are in reality accusations of sorcery.

178 In the foregoing brief note it has not been possible adequately 754 to treat the subject, but it will be seen that sorcery has long been a divisive influence in Umbundu life. It sometimes seriously affects the cohesion of the household and the larger kinship groups. Economic, political, and other forces now seem to be acting to increase the incidence of sorcery, the influence of which is probably a considerable factor in the present rapid disintegration of the Umbundu social structure.

The Hierarchy of Age

• 561 Passing references have been made to associations of coevals. The Ovimbundu recognize very definitely the hierarchy of age and consider orderly society quite impossible without it. One of the keenest criticisms of the European and his ways is contained in the aphorism:

[538] *Kundele ku ku li ukulu.*
In 'civilization' there is no senior.

To Umbundu wisdom this is an impossible state of affairs;

[1] The Umbundu term is *oku undeka*; *vide* ref. *infra*, p. 107, n. 1.

1: Childs M-S (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

there must be a responsible senior and, hence as a matter of course, the following is accepted:

Ndalu kalukuko ku Vesa:
Fire is not older than water:

Ciyo wa pindikapo.
Potsherd (or frying-pan) passes between (i.e. keeps the peace).

As potsherd (or frying-pan) keeps water from putting out fire and fire from consuming water, so the elder keeps the peace between the young of relatively equal status.

The hierarchy of age is taken as a matter of course and circumcision camps or other formal 'schools' are not considered necessary to reinforce an attitude which no one would dream of disputing. At the present time there is quite a vogue for circumcision camps (*vakasenumba*) in the southern or south-eastern half of the country. Some affirm that these are new-fangled notions coming in from neighbouring tribes. Others declare the institution to be very old. The Ngalangi people say that they have always had both *ovumba* for the boys and *uso wakãli* for the girls. Some tribes require *ovumba* of the king before he may rule. Even where the institution is not in vogue, there are associations of coevals (*vakuaciuko*) whose members have definite rights and duties toward each other. These matters are treated more fully in a later chapter. Inasmuch as these age-grade sets are both age and sex divisions, they contain some elements of social cleavage, but their association with the economic and political sides of life makes them a strongly cohesive force for society.

Umbundu Social Structure: Summary

Summarizing the evidence of the present chapter, I wish only to tie in a few of the more important threads so that the pattern of the Umbundu social structure may be seen at a glance.

Although the Ovimbundu no longer maintain the political life which formerly existed, there are elements of cohesion which still give reality to their social organism. These elements all centre in or spring from the kinship group.

With regard to the village, two facts stand out:

1. The Umbundu village is a local kinship unit, with the villagers quite literally the children of the headman-patriarch.
2. Although its political, religious, and social functions may be

1: Childs M-S (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

182 621 in a somewhat decadent state, the Umbundu village has up to the present maintained its status as a local kinship unit.

182 592 602 The household is not a solitary unit but a part of the village. Since it is constituted by marriage, it embodies the union of at least two kinship groups. The attitudes and behaviour patterns within the Umbundu household are basically those universally recognized. In common with the households of most Bantu cultures, it differs from the European model in that it extends its attitudes and behaviour patterns to the wider kinship groupings by means of a classificatory system of relationship.

613 182 In the wider kinship groupings (*epata*), the Ovimbundu recognize both the maternal (*oluina*) and the paternal (*oluse*) lines of descent. The functions of the latter have been largely local, residential, social, and religious, with succession (of status) in the male line. The function of the former has been cohesive over a larger territory, with a recognized head in whom has been vested both religious and economic functions. Both his office and the inheritance of property descend in the female line. Much of the power, economic and personal, formerly held by the *oluina*, in the person of the mother's brother, seems to be passing at the present time to the *oluse*, in the person of the father. The bilineal kinship system has been a strongly cohesive social force.

182 [582] The form of marriage practised by the Ovimbundu is of the two-way cross-cousin type in both lines of kin and in three generations. It seems to be an individual type developed in the particular social and economic situation of the Ovimbundu. As a contract between two families and as a new venture, the marriage relation demands that great attention be given to attitudes and behaviour patterns which emphasize mutual respect.

[561] The hierarchy of age is a very real factor in the Umbundu social structure. Age-set 'schools' have not existed generally throughout the tribes, but there are associations of coevals. This is largely a cohesive force.

754 Sorcery is the most important disruptive force at work *within* Umbundu society. Working as it does, within kinship groups, and inasmuch as it seems to be on the increase, sorcery embodies a real danger to social cohesion.

184 718 Homogeneity has never been an attribute of the Ovimbundu as regards their racial or cultural make-up. The slave-trade injected other and more diverse elements, and recent movements and

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

The extent to which the order of the *vakuacisoko* exists at present or has existed among the Ovimbundu would be a very interesting subject of inquiry. It is certain that the institution does not exist throughout the territory but only in certain families which belong to the order and pass on membership in it by heredity. Whether there are certain regions where it is or was in the past more strongly held to is not known. It seems to be or to have been more strongly entrenched among the cattle-rearing people to the south, but it is also said to have been practised in Lupolo (Libolo) and even in the region of Luanda.[1] Among the Ovimbundu it seems to have been stronger in the past than at present. Few if any practising members of the set are now known. All 'coevals' or members of the set were in duty bound to render mutual assistance. All had mutual rights to the property of the others without complaint or remedy. These mutual rights seem to have been extended to the extreme limit of having intercourse with each other's wives, nor did the injury or even the death of one brought about by another allow the injured family to seek revenge or legal redress. It was the duty of *vakuacisoko* to bury their fellows, themselves digging the grave and attending to all expenses not already supplied by the family. Theirs was also the duty of burying strangers without family who would not be buried by others fearing defilement or responsibility for their debts. Bastos gives a tradition ascribing the origin of this institution to a wager laid between two chiefs.[2] It seems more probable, however, that it is connected with circumcision and tribal initiation. An analogous set of rights and duties is said to have existed among the Herero between 'coevals' circumcised at the same time.[3]

Tribal initiation for both boys (*oku lisevi:a evamba*) and girls (*uso wakãi*) is carried on in camps or 'schools' in the southern and south-eastern tribes of the Ovimbundu. These camps are regularly held in Kalukembe, Kakonda, and Ngalangi. Sporadic instances of individual camps have also occurred recently in Viye, Bailundu, Sambu, Wambu, Cingolo, and Cikuma. Even in those regions where camps are regularly held, only the children of certain families enter. It seems that there has been some passing on of the custom by heredity and, in general, there is intermarriage only between families and individuals who adhere to the initiation

[1] Bastos, 1909, op. cit., pp. 67–70.

[2] Ibid., p. 69 f.

[3] Vedder in Hahn *et al.*, op. cit., p. 178.

1: Childs M-S (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

preference for a polygynous household at this age, but no definite tradition which urges one 'to become lord and master of a complete circular village'.[1] Women are happiest while carrying a baby on the back.

Onyima yima ha yi mõlĩ omõlĩ,
Back good (yet) it does not see a child,

wails a childless woman. No grandmother is satisfied without herself caring for at least one grandchild. Old age is subject to its own burden of the years but among the Ovimbundu the aged are treated with much respect and deference.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS V–VII

The periods in the life of an Ocimbundu may be summarized as follows:

1. The 'Marginal' Period of the First Week (*ocitete*) until the funicle drops.
2. The Baby Proper (second week until about seventh month) (*oñaña*) (from turning black until sitting alone).
3. The Sitting-baby or Toddler (*ocisemba*) (from sitting alone until mastery of walking and completion of weaning).
4. Early Childhood (from weaning until about 9 years) (*oneña*). Period of socio-psychological education.
5. Later Childhood (from about 9 until puberty) (*omõlĩ*). Period of technical training and assumption of economic responsibility.
6. Adolescence (from puberty until marriage). Period of preparation for marriage and full adulthood.
7. First Year of Marriage, during which the bride completes her training under her mother-in-law's guidance.
8. Full Adulthood (from birth of first child).

[1] Junod, op. cit., 1927, vol. i, p. 127.

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Vakwaciteko (lit. "those of the set")(1)

Childs considers that the custom of vacwaciteko is probably connected with circumcision and initiation. It does not exist throughout the territory but only in certain families who belong to the order and are said to pass it on by heredity. It seems to have been stronger in the past, but few practising members of the set are now known. All 'covala' or members of the set were in duty bound to render mutual assistance, and all had mutual rights to the property of the others without complaint or remedy. These rights seem to have included that of having intercourse with each other's wives. Injury or even death of one member brought about by another did not allow the injured family to seek revenge or legal redress. It was the duty of the vacwaciteko to bury their fellows, themselves digging the grave and attending to all the expenses ordinarily supplied by the family of the deceased. They also had the duty of burying strangers without family who would not be buried by others for fear of defilement or responsibility for their debts.(2) Childs describes the vacwaciteko associations as "age-grade sets",(3) but gives no further explanation.

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"With or without initiation rites, adolescence is largely preparation for marriage and full adult life. Traditionally, adolescence is not a time of conflict or stress....Contract and *corvée* labour have brought profound changes, especially for the young men. As for the girls, a few have gone into the towns; relatively few, however, other than those who attend a boarding-school, lead a life essentially different from that which has been traditionally theirs."(4)

MARRIAGE

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Available information concerning degrees of relationship in which marriage is permitted, marriage-payment, polygyny and divorce has been given above.(5) Evumbi(6) and Hambly(7) describe some of the customs and ceremonies connected with marriage.

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For three nights after the commencement of the marriage ceremony the girl sleeps with her own parents, while the married women and six unmarried girls whom she has chosen as her attendants sleep in the house of her husband. On the fourth day she moves to the man's house, bringing her cooking utensils. For the first month, according to Hambly, or, according to Evumbi, the first year, i.e. until the grain is ripe in her new fields, she lives with her husband's mother or aunt, in whose kitchen she cooks food each night to send to her husband in the *onjango*. When her first child is two or three months old, a present of a pig passes from the girl's mother to her husband.

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Childs(8) adds that adulthood comes with marriage, and marriage is only recognised as complete when the first child has been born. A child or an adolescent is only a "potential" person *(ocuma)* and the permanency

(1) Childs, op.cit., p.115.
(2) Those who buried a man were considered responsible for his debts. Hence corpses were often placed in trees.
(3) Childs, op.cit., p.39.
(4) Ibid., p.117.
(5) Pp.204f.
(6) 1938.
(7) 1934, pp.180f.
(8) Op.cit., pp.119-20.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

of the word depends upon the syllable accented and the context, as further explained in the chapter on the Umbundu language. 576 643

A man or woman of the royal family greets the king with the words *na kuku*; *na* means "lord," and *kuku* is a term used for any old man to whom the speaker intends to show respect. *Kuku* is also applied to a man who stands in the relationship of grandfather. The king is expected to reply to a greeting given by one of the royal family by placing his right hand on his chest and saying twice, "*kalunga*." There may then follow from the king a question relating to welfare in general. Possibly the king will inquire the object of his subject's journey. A *sekulu* ("chief of a village") greets a king in the same manner as does a commoner, and the king replies as he would to a commoner. 565

Commoners greet a *sekulu* with the words *na kalunga* ("lord, greeting"). One *sekulu* greets another of the same rank with the one word *kalunga*, accompanied by clapping of the palms. Male commoners clap hands on meeting; this action is accompanied by the word *kalunga*, from each of them. Two female commoners use the word *kalunga* as a greeting, but as a rule they do not clap hands. They do, however, clap their palms when greeting a woman of the royal house.

Boys and girls must greet their fathers, maternal uncles, grandfathers, and other old men with either of the terms *na kuku* or *na kalunga*, the latter being more usual. *Na kuku* would be the appropriate term of respect for any elderly man. Children use the same words (*na kuku*) when addressing any elderly woman, including a grandmother. A usual greeting of a child to the mother, likewise to the mother's sister, would be *kalunga mai* ("greetings, mother"). 561 576

There is no prescribed form of address to the medicine-man. Greetings between a commoner and a medicine-man follow the usage noted for two commoners. Ngonga says, "They will treat him (the medicine-man) like a village chief if he is an old man and good. Perhaps they will say *na kalunga* as if talking to a chief." 576 [654] [758]

In the early morning people pass the greeting *oku lipasula*. This means "we have been like dead, we are awake." The appropriate early morning greeting of a commoner to the king or to a chief is *oku lipasula a kuku*. A usual afternoon greeting is *oku lañisa*. The evening greeting is *oku lisuñinya*. [643]

One who desires to pass across a room usually walks in front of other people, but while passing the attitude must not be erect. The thumb and middle finger should be snapped together, while the words